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SUBJECT: Corruption in Afghanistan: Karzai versus Khalilzad

¶1. The popular Tolo TV News Special, "Guzareh-e-Shashunim, 6:30 Report" focused on recent comments by President Karzai and Ambassador Khalilzad on corruption in Afghanistan. The program, which aired on [DATE], led with Khalilzad's statement that corruption in the Karzai government was detrimental to progress in Afghanistan. It followed with Karzai's recent comments at the conference for Community Development Councils, in which he admitted that corruption was a problem in his administration, and called on government officials to serve the Afghan people and not themselves. Panelists praised Khalilzad and Karzai for raising the issue in public fora, but encouraged Karzai to take specific action, rather than complain about it.

¶2. Panelists stated that Karzai is not able to manage internal pressures within his administration, is not accountable to the people and is not implementing parliament's decisions. They also commented that corruption was contributing to the government's increasing weakness and unpopularity, and they were grateful that Khalilzad raised the issue at the international level. They also praised Karzai for admitting to the corruption problem, but urged him to name the corrupt officials in his government and to take action against them. Panelists stated that Khalilzad's comments were an indirect criticism by the U.S. government, which should send Karzai a message about the scope of the corruption problem. The Tolo TV presenter also speculated about unconfirmed media reports that Karzai would call an emergency Loya Jirga and hand over the power to the people's representatives.

¶3. Panelists on the program included Dr. Muhaiuddin Mahdi, a political analyst; Noorulhaq Uloomi, a member of parliament from Kandahar Province and former military officer during the communist regime; Moin Marasteyal, a member of parliament from Kunduz Province; Nasrullah Stanikzai, a Kabul University law professor; and Najib Mahmood, a Kabul University political science professor.